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Agyemang-Bonsu, William ; Benioff, Ron ; Cox, Sadie; Desgain, Denis DR; Forner, Claudio ; Hinostroza, Miriam L.; Olsen, Karen Holm; Sharma, Sudhir; Wienges, Sebastian

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Linkages between NAMA – LEDS – MRV¹

1. Introduction

Low Emission Development Strategies (LEDS)², Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) and Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) are three of the key conceptual components emerging as part of the global architecture for a new climate agreement by 2015. The three components are developed in the context of global and national goals for sustainable development contributing to long term national development goals and priorities.

With an aim to contribute to the development of the global climate architecture for enhanced mitigation actions, the objective of this paper is to identify how the three components are conceptually interlinked. Identifying the linkages can inform the work on each component and strengthen coordination of work in the context of the three big partnerships; the International Partnership on Mitigation and MRV, the LEDS Global Partnership and the NAMA Partnership.

2. Origin of NAMA, LEDS and MRV concepts

NAMA is a key concept to be used by developing countries to structure and promote their potential emission reductions. Its origins are found in the Bali Action Plan (BAP) adopted in 2007, which launched a new process to enhance implementation of the Convention. With regards to national/international action on mitigation by developing countries, the BAP addressed:

“Nationally appropriate mitigation actions [...] in the context of sustainable development, supported and enabled by technology, financing and capacity-building, in a measurable, reportable and verifiable manner” (UNFCCC 2007, decision 1/CP.13. FCCC/CP/2007/6/Add.1).

After 5 years of negotiation, the Cancun Agreements set the stage for action on mitigation until 2020. These agreements specify that *“developing country Parties will take nationally appropriate mitigation actions [...] aimed at achieving a deviation in emissions relative to ‘business as usual’ emissions in 2020”* (UNFCCC 2010, decision 1/CP.16. FCCC/CP/2010/7/Add.1). This is the first time that a common goal is agreed upon for developing countries to mitigate their GHG emissions³. By focusing on deviation below business as usual, the agreements take into account the development priorities of these countries by addressing only future emissions. The developed countries, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities of the Convention, will reduce their emissions in absolute terms.

The concept of Low Emission Development Strategies (LEDS) was introduced in submissions to negotiations as a proposal in 2008. It was seen as an instrument to inform the international community on funding needs and priorities relating to low carbon development and to help gauge the level of global climate change action⁴. In the negotiations leading up to the Cancun Agreements some developing countries feared, the LEDS would be a back door to binding emission reduction targets, if support to NAMAs was to be conditional on the development of an LEDS. The development of LEDS is hence voluntary for developing countries while the COP decisions make a stronger recommendation for developed countries to take the lead in developing LEDS.

¹ Authors: William Agyemang-Bonsu (UNFCCC), Ron Benioff (NREL), Sadie Cox (NREL), Denis Desgain (URC), Claudio Forner (UNFCCC), Miriam Hinostroza (URC), Karen Holm Olsen (URC), Sudhir Sharma (URC), Sebastian Wienges (GIZ)
The opinion in the paper is not necessarily that one of the organizations which the authors are affiliated with.

² The terms Low Carbon Development Strategies (LCDS) and Low Emissions Development Strategies (LEDS) are used interchangeably, in COP decisions. For consistency we use the term LEDS.

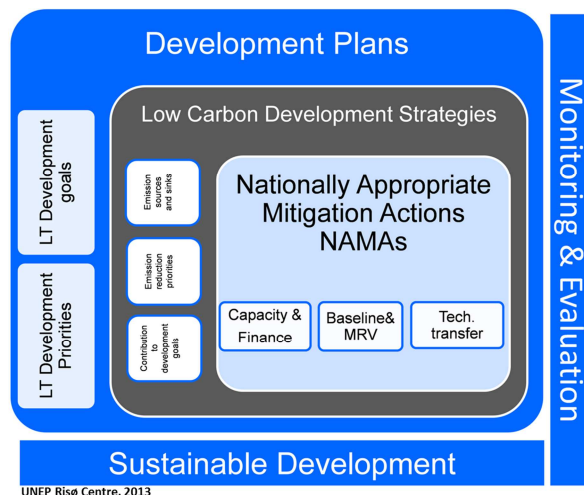
³ UNEP Risoe Center, 2013. Understanding the concept of Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Action.

⁴ OECD and IEA, 2010. Low Emission Development Strategies: Technical, institutional and policy lessons.

In order to make the voluntary commitments from all countries tangible to track progress towards the global 2°C objective and enhance transparency at country level the nationally appropriate mitigation actions should be measured, reported and verified.

3. The context of sustainable development

Sustainable development⁵ at national and global levels provides the context for LEDS and NAMAs (Figure 1). A leading principle of sustainable development is the right to sustainable development which is also enshrined in the Cancun Agreement and known as a 'development first' approach. Following a development first approach the challenge is, how to mainstream mitigation actions into development frameworks to achieve low emission development pathways that contribute to national development priorities in a sustainable way. National sustainable development goals and priorities are thus the foundation for LEDS and NAMAs. In this context, greenhouse gas reductions represent a positive externality, a co-benefit for sustainable development.



Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of climate and development impacts and linkages between LEDS and NAMAs can be done at two complementary levels, namely for 1) LEDS with an aim to track progress for transformational change at national level, and for 2) NAMAs with an aim to MRV the co-benefits of concrete actions along with the GHG reductions⁶.

Figure 1: Linkages between LCDs, NAMAs and MRV in the context of sustainable development

4. Low Emission Development Strategies

Though no internationally agreed definition exists, LEDS refer to forward-looking national economic development plans or strategies that encompass low-emission and/or climate-resilient economic growth³. The Copenhagen and Cancun agreements both recognize LEDS as a key planning tool to define a medium to long term framework for addressing GHG emissions of countries in context of sustainable development.

LEDS are aimed at decoupling economic growth from emissions increases and enable countries to identify and embark on transformative sustainable development programs that will generate economic, social, and environmental benefits.

LEDS thus typically include economy-wide development and emission goals and action plans for achieving these goals. LEDS action plans may be established both for individual sectors and across sectors and include policies, financing strategies and measures, technology development and deployment programs, and capacity building initiatives⁷. National goals for transformational change may be informed by the UN Rio+20 process for global sustainable development goals (SDGs) and the UN Post-2015 Development Agenda that are aligned to achieve a single global framework for poverty reduction and sustainable development by 2015 and beyond.

⁵ The principle of sustainable development is defined in the Brundtland Report (UN, 1987) as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Definitions of SD at national level will vary according to countries nationally appropriate development priorities.

⁶ Olsen, K. H., 2013. "NAMAs for sustainable development." Mitigation Talks 3-4(4-1): 13-18.

⁷ UNEP Risoe Center, 2011. Low Carbon Development Strategies: A Primer on Framing Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMAs) in Developing Countries.

5. Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions

NAMAs are any voluntary mitigation action tailored to the national context, characteristics and capabilities, and embedded in national sustainable development priorities with the goal to deviate from BAU emissions³. In other words, NAMAs are a means to deliver development benefits through an alternative that is less carbon intensive. The general recommendation in the literature⁸ is that NAMAs should emerge from national development planning to ensure country ownership and to achieve sustainable development through low carbon options. MRV is an important element of NAMAs for tracking progress on the one hand and for providing the informational basis for planning and implementation on the other hand. NAMAs are typically driven by similar goals and processes as LEDS, which can provide the framing and overarching strategy to inform and guide identification and development of NAMAs.

Each country will address the scope of NAMAs taking into account their national circumstances, data availability, and institutional capabilities to design and implement NAMAs. Nevertheless, the scope of a NAMA should be such that it has transformational impact but is also practicable from the standpoint of design and implementation. In order to design and implement such NAMAs, some countries might need technical and other capacity-building support³.

6. MRV

Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is an established process in countries to track implementation of policies and plans as well as feedback to enable course correction. M&E of projects and policies is a requirement present in almost every international initiative. It is also an important tool for transparently reporting to stakeholders the outcomes and impacts of implementation. In this context, MRV for NAMA is rooted in the need to monitor and evaluate any action taken to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. As such, M&E of development impacts is not new but MRV of greenhouse gas reductions brings in a new dimension through the need to track, report and verify the mitigation outcomes (greenhouse gas emission reductions) of NAMAs. Though, the COP decisions do not require MRV of LEDS, M&E is an useful management tool to assess the progress in implementation, and such would be a critical tool for countries in tracking progress of implementing the LEDS as well refining strategies and identifying further mitigation actions.

MRV entails undertaking measurements of progress indicators or performance matrixes of mitigation actions and any financial, technology or capacity building support received; reporting these measurements and their associated methodologies; and, finally subject them to verification, which could be through third party (see box).

The components of MRV³

“Measure”- collect relevant information on the progress and results of the NAMA;

“Report”- communicate the measured information in a transparent and standardized manner;

“Verify” – assess the completeness, consistency, and reliability of the information by an independent process.

From an international perspective, MRV increases the *“transparency of mitigation efforts made by the developing countries’ as well as build mutual confidence among all countries”* (UNFCCC 2011, Decision 2/CP.17. FCCC/CP/2011/9/Add.1).

From a national perspective, MRV constitutes the basis for countries to assess and track the achievement of national sustainable development goals as well as objectives of climate change policy. A good MRV system for NAMAs provides the necessary basis for developing systems for monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of implementation of LEDS, and support the measurement of their transformational impacts.

The MRV framework is divided into two tiers³:

⁸ GIZ, 2012. Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions: a Technical Assistance Source book for Practitioners.

THE NATIONAL MRV TIER addresses the voluntary national mitigation obligations of the developing countries. It will be conducted at the international level under the UNFCCC. This tier covers MRV of all the national mitigation efforts and the national GHG inventory.

THE NAMA MRV TIER addresses the MRV of NAMAs individually. It will be conducted by the entities in charge of implementing the NAMA and providing financial or any other type of support to it.

The MRV of NAMAs helps generate information that could be used to evaluate the implementation of LEDS. Countries still need to develop institutional arrangements for collating this information as well as systems for an effective evaluation of the LEDS. Such a national system will also provide a feedback mechanism in evaluating the evolving national and international situation as well as guide future work on identification and development of NAMAs in the country. A domestic MRV system would be an effective means to coordinate mitigation action across various actors in the country to ensure synergies with national sustainable development priorities.

7. Conclusions

In a top-down perspective, LEDS will provide an overarching national policy framework for NAMAs and support the definition of mitigation goals and implementation of mitigation actions aligned with a country's long-term vision for sustainable development. LEDS will also ensure coherence across NAMAs and consideration of synergies across NAMAs and sectors. In this sense, cross-sectoral LEDS analysis will provide a robust foundation for prioritizing and selecting NAMAs.

In a bottom-up perspective, NAMAs, which are often implemented at the subnational level, can link LEDS to subnational planning processes. NAMAs can build on LEDS analysis to provide more strategic assessment of specific actions or projects. As mitigation actions implemented on the ground, NAMAs can have significant near-term positive impacts that can help to build support for longer-term LEDS overall. LEDS and NAMAs can thus complement each other analytically⁹.

M&E systems provide an overall framework for evaluating progress of LEDS over time. MRV of NAMAs provides concrete tools for measuring and reporting on impacts of individual actions consistent with this overall M&E framework. MRV can thus enhance transparency at domestic and international level and serve as a management tool in the process of developing NAMAs and LEDS and is useful for the evaluation of actions and strategies in order to adjust the objectives and plans over time.

LEDS, NAMAs and MRV are thus complementary concepts to shape national climate frameworks and facilitate actions that contribute to emissions reductions and sustainable development objectives.



On behalf of



Federal Ministry for the
Environment, Nature Conservation
and Nuclear Safety

of the Federal Republic of Germany

⁹ LEDS Global Partnership, 2013, Low Emissions Development Strategies and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions: Charting Complementary Paths Forward.